



The Return of the Caesars

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I S THERE today a man among the White races who has eyes to see what is going on around him on the face of the globe? To see the immensity of the danger which looms over this mass of peoples? I do not speak of the educated or uneducated city crowds, the newspaper-readers, the herds who vote at elections—and, for that matter, there is no longer any quality difference between voters and those for whom they vote—but of the *ruling* classes of the White nations, in so far as they have not been destroyed, of the statesmen in so far as there are any left; of the *true* leaders of policy, of economic life, of armies, and of thought. Does anyone, I ask, see over and beyond his time, his own continent, his country, or even the narrow circle of his own activities?

We live in momentous times. The stupendous dynamism of the historical epoch that has now dawned makes it the grandest, not only in the Faustian civilization of Western Europe, but—for that very reason—in all world-history, greater and by far more terrible than the ages of Caesar and Napoleon. Yet how blind are the human beings over whom this mighty destiny is surging, whirling them in confusion, exalting them, destroying them! Who among them sees and comprehends what is being done to them and around them? Some wise old Chinaman or Indian, perhaps, who gazes around him in silence with the stored-up thought of a thousand years in his soul.

But how superficial, how narrow, how small-minded are the judgments and measures of Western Europe and America! What do the inhabitants of the Middle West of the United States know of what goes on beyond New York and San Francisco? What conception has a middle-class Englishman, not to speak of a French provincial, of the trend of affairs on the Continent? What, indeed, does

any one of them know of the direction in which his very own destiny is facing? All we have is a number of absurd catchwords, such as "overcoming the economic crisis," "understanding of peoples," "national security and self-sufficiency," with which to "overcome" catastrophes within the space of a generation or two by means of "prosperity" and disarmament.

But it is of Germany that I am speaking here: Germany, to whom the storm of facts is more menacing than to any other country and whose existence is, in the most alarming sense of the word, at stake. What short-sightedness and noisy superficiality reigns among us, and how provincial the standpoint when major problems emerge! Let us set up a ring-fenced Third Empire or, alternatively, Soviet state; let us do away with the army or with property, with economists, or with agriculture; let us give maximum independence to all the little provinces, or, alternatively, suppress them; let us allow the former lords of industry or administration to get to work again in the style of 1900, or—why not?—let us have a revolution, proclaim a dictatorship (are there not dozens of candidates confident of their fitness for the job?), and all will be well.

But—*Germany is not an island*. No other country is in the same degree woven actively or passively into the world's destiny. Her geographical situation alone, her lack of natural boundaries, make this inevitable. In the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries she was "Central Europe"; in the Twentieth she is again, as in and after the Thirteenth Century, a frontier against "Asia." For no country is it more essential that its sphere of political and economic thought should reach far beyond its own boundaries. Everything that happens afar involves the heart of Germany.

New Generation Not Trained

Our past is having its revenge—seven hundred years of the petty provincial regime of small states with never a breath of greatness, an idea, an aim. This is not going to be made good in two generations. And Bismarck's creative work had the one great fault that he did not train the coming generation to meet the facts of the new form of our political life. The facts were seen, but not grasped. Men could not inwardly adapt themselves to the new horizons, problems, and obligations. They did not *live* with them. And the average German continued to apply to his greater country the old particularist and partisan outlook—shallow and cramped, stupid and parochial. This small-mindedness dates from the time of the Hohenstaufen emperors and the Hansa. The first, whose vision ranged over the Mediterranean, and the second, whose rule extended from the Scheldt to Novgorod, alike fell before other and more securely based powers for want of wise and substantial backing from within their own frontiers.

And from that time on, the German has shut himself up in innumerable little fatherlands and petty local interests, measuring world history by his own horizon, and dreaming hungrily and miserably of a kingdom in the clouds—to describe which condition the phrase "German idealism" was invented. To this petty and essentially German mode of thought belong almost all the political ideals and utopias that have sprouted from the bog of the Weimar state: the International, Communist, Pacifist, Ultramontane, Federal, "Aryan" visions of *sacrum imperium*, Soviet state, or Third Empire, as the case might be. All parties now think and act as if Germany had the world to herself. Trade unions see no further than the industrial area. Colonial policy has always been odious to them because it

does not fit in with the scheme of class war. In their dogmatic narrowness they do not, or will not, comprehend that it was precisely the working man for whom the economic imperialism of the years around 1900, with its assured facilities for the sale of products and the purchase of raw materials, was the basic premise of existence.

This the English workman had long before grasped. The enthusiasm of German democracy for disarmament stops short at the frontier of the French sphere of power. The Federalists would have their already greatly reduced country split up again into a bundle of dwarf states of the old sort, thereby giving foreign powers the opportunity to play off one against the other. And the National Socialists believe that they can afford to ignore the world or oppose it, and to build their castles-in-the-air without creating a possibly silent, but very palpable reaction from abroad.

Destiny, Time and Death

Added to all this is the universal *dread of reality*. We "pale-faces" have it, all of us, although we are seldom, and most of us never, conscious of it. It is the spiritual weakness of the "late" man of the higher civilizations, who lives in his cities cut off from the peasant and the soil and thereby from the natural experiencing of destiny, time and death. He has become too wide-awake, too accustomed to ponder perpetually over yesterday and tomorrow, and cannot bear that which he sees and is forced to see: the *relentless* course of things, *senseless* chance, and *real* history striding pitilessly through the centuries into which the individual with his tiny scrap of private life is irrevocably born at the appointed place.

That is what he longs to forget, refute, or contest. He takes flight

from history into solitude, into imaginary far-away systems, into some faith or another, or into suicide. Like a grotesque ostrich he buries his head in hopes, ideals, and *cowardly* optimism: it is so, but it ought not to be, therefore it is otherwise. We sing in the woods at night because we are afraid. Similarly, the cowardice of cities shouts its apparent optimism to the world at large for very fear. Reality is no longer to be borne. The wish-picture of the future is set in place of facts—although fate has never taken any notice of human fancies—from the children's Land of Do-Nothing to the World Peace and Workers' Paradise of the grown-ups.

Little as one knows of events in the future—for all that can be got from a comparison with other civilizations is the general form of future facts and their march through the ages—so much is certain: the forces which will sway the future are no other than those of the past. These forces are: the will of the strong, *healthy* instincts, race, the will to possession and power; while justice, happiness, and peace—those dreams which will always remain dreams—hover ineffectively over them.

Further, in our own civilization since the Sixteenth Century it has rapidly grown more impossible for most of us to gain a general view of the ever more confusing events and situations of world politics and economics, or to grasp (let alone control) the forces and tendencies at work in them. True statesmen become rarer and rarer. Most of the doings (as distinct from the events) in the history of these centuries were indeed the work of semi-experts and amateurs with luck on their side. Still, they could always rely upon the people's instinct to back them. It is only now that this instinct has become so weak, and the voluble criticism of blithe ignorance so strong,

as to make it more and more likely that a true statesman, with a real knowledge of things, will not receive this instinctive support—even at the level of grudging tolerance—but will be prevented from doing what has to be done by the opposition of all the “know-betters.”

Frederick the Great experienced the first of these types of opposition; Bismarck almost fell a victim to the second. Only later generations, and not even they, can appreciate the grandeur and creativeness of such leaders. But we do have to see to it that the present confines itself to ingratitude and incomprehension and does not proceed to counter-action. Germans in particular are great at suspecting, criticizing, and voiding creative action. They have none of that historical experience and force of tradition which are congenital with English life. A nation of poets and thinkers in the process of becoming a nation of babblers and persecutors. Every real governor is unpopular among his frightened, cowardly, and uncomprehending contemporaries. And one must be more than an “idealist” to understand even this.

We are still in the *Age of Rationalism*, which began in the Eighteenth Century and is now rapidly nearing its close. We all are its creatures whether we know and wish it or not. The word is familiar enough, but who knows how much it implies? It is the arrogance of the urban intellect, which, detached from its roots and no longer guided by strong instinct, looks down with contempt on the full-blooded thinking of the past and the wisdom of ancient peasant stock. It is the period in which everyone can read and write and therefore must have his say and always “knows better.” This type of mind is obsessed by concepts—the new gods of the age—and it exercises its wits on the world as it sees it. “It is

no good,” it says. “We could make it better; here goes, let us set up a program for a better world!”

Nothing could be easier for persons of intelligence, and no doubt seems to be felt that this world will then materialize of itself. It is given a label, “Human Progress,” and now that it has a name, it *is*. Those who doubt it are narrow reactionaries, heretics, and, what is worse, persons devoid of democratic virtue: away with them! In this wise the fear of reality was overcome by intellectual arrogance, the darkness that comes from ignorance of all things of life, spiritual poverty, lack of reverence, and, finally, world-alien stupidity—for there is nothing stupider than rootless urban intelligence. In English offices and clubs it used to be called *common sense*; in French salons, *esprit*; in German philosophers’ studies, *Pure Reason*. The shallow optimism of the cultural philistine is ceasing to fear the elemental historical facts and beginning to *despise* them. Every “know-better” seeks to absorb them in his scheme (in which experience has no part), to make them conceptually more complete than actually they are, and to subordinate them to himself in his mind because he has not livingly experienced them, but only perceived them.

Theory or Experience

This doctrinaire clinging to theory for lack of experience, or rather this lack of *ability* to *make* experience, finds literary expression in a flood of schemes for political, social, and economic systems and utopias, and practical expression in that craze for organization which, becoming an aim in itself, produces bureaucracies that either collapse through their own hollowness or destroy the living order. Rationalism is at bottom nothing but criticism, and the critic is the reverse of a creator; he dissects and he

reassembles; conception and birth are alien to him. Accordingly his work is artificial and lifeless, and when brought into contact with real life, it *kills*. All these systems and organizations are paper productions; they are methodical and absurd and live *only* on the paper they are written on. The process began at the time of Rousseau and Kant with philosophical ideologies that lost themselves in generalities; passed in the Nineteenth Century to scientific constructions with scientific, physical, Darwinian methods—sociology, economics, materialistic history-writing—and lost itself in the Twentieth in the literary output of problem novels and party programs.

Idealism and Materialism

But let there be no mistake; idealism and materialism are equally parts of it. Both are rationalist through and through, in the case of Kant as of Voltaire and Holbach, of Novalis as of Proudhon; of the ideologues of the Wars of Liberation as of Marx; of the materialist conception of history quite as much as the idealistic, whether the meaning and aim of it is "progress," technics, "liberty," the "happiness of the greatest number," or the flowering of art, poetry, and thought. In both cases there is the failure to realize that destiny in history depends on quite other, robuster forces. Human history is war history. Among the few genuine historians of standing, none was ever popular, and among statesmen Bismarck achieved popularity only when it was of no more use to him.

But Romanticism, too, with its lack of a sense for reality, is just as much an expression of rationalist arrogance as are Idealism and Materialism. They are all, in fact, closely related, and it would be difficult to discover the boundary between these two trends

of thought in any political or social Romantic. In every outstanding Materialist a Romantic lies hidden. Though he may scorn the cold, shallow, methodical mind of others, he has himself enough of that sort of mind to do so in the same way and with the same arrogance. Romanticism is no sign of powerful instincts, but, on the contrary, of a weak, self-detesting intellect. They are all infantile, these Romantics; men who remain children too long (or for ever), without the strength to criticize themselves, but with perpetual inhibitions arising from the obscure awareness of their own personal weakness; who are impelled by the morbid idea of reforming society, which is to them too masculine, too healthy, too sober. And to reform it, not with knives and revolvers in the Russian fashion—heaven forbid!—but by noble talk and poetic theories. Hapless indeed they are if, lacking creative power, they lack also the artistic talent to persuade at least themselves that they possess it.

Yet even in their art they are feminine and weak, incapable of setting a great novel or a great tragedy on its legs, still less a pure philosophy of any force. All that appears is spineless, lyric, bloodless scenarios, and fragmentary ideas, all of them displaying an innocence of an antagonism to the world which amounts to absurdity. But it was the same with the unfading "Youths" (*Junglinge*), with their "old German" coats and pipes—Jahn and Arndt, even, included. Stein himself was unable to control his romantic taste for ancient constitutions sufficiently to allow him to turn his extensive practical experience to successful account in diplomacy. Oh, they were heroes, and noble, and ready to be martyrs at any moment; but they talked too much about German nature and too little about railways

and customs unions, and thus became only an obstacle in the way of Germany's *real* future. Did they ever so much as hear the name of the great Friedrich List, who committed suicide in 1846 because no one understood and supported his far-sighted and modern political aim, the building of an economic Germany? But they all knew the names of Arminius and Thusnelda.

And these same everlasting "Youths" are with us again today, immature, destitute of the slightest experience or even real desire for experience, but writing and talking away about politics, fired by uniforms and badges, and clinging fantastically to some theory or other. There is a social Romanticism of sentimental Communists, a political Romanticism which regards election figures and the intoxication of mass-meeting oratory as deeds, and an economic Romanticism which trickles out from behind the gold theories of sick minds that know nothing of the inner forms of modern economics. They can only feel in the mass, where they can deaden the dull sense of their weakness by multi-playing themselves. And this they call the Overcoming of Individualism.

And like *all* Rationalists and Romantics, they are as sentimental as a street ditty. Even the "Contract Social" and "The Rights of Man" are products of the Age of Sensibility. Burke, on the contrary, like a true statesman, argued that on his side of the channel men demanded their due as Englishmen and not as human beings, and he was right. This was practical political thinking, not the rationalistic issue of undisciplined emotions. For this evil sentimentality which lies over all the theoretical currents of the two centuries—Liberalism, Communism, Pacifism—and all the books, speeches, and revolutions, originates in spiritual indiscipline, in

personal weakness, in lack of the training imparted by a stern old tradition.

It is "bourgeois" or "plebeian," in so far as these are terms of abuse. It looks at human things, history, and political destiny *from below*, meanly, from the cellar window, the street, the writers' cafe, the national assembly; not from height and distance. It detests every kind of greatness, everything that towers, rules, is superior; and construction means for it only the pulling-down of all the products of civilization, of the state, of society, to the level of little people, above which its pitiful emotionalism cannot soar to understand. That is all that the prefix "folk" or "people" means today, for the "people" in the mouth of any Rationalist or Romanticist does not mean the well-formed nation, shaped and graded by Destiny in the course of ages, but that portion of the dull *formless* mass which everyone senses as his equal, from the "proletariat" to "humanity."

This domination of the rootless urban intellect is drawing to a close. And there emerges, as a final way of understanding things as they are, *Skepticism*—fundamental doubt as to the meaning and value of theoretical reflection, as to its ability to arrive at conclusions by critical and abstract methods or to achieve anything by practical ones; Skepticism in the form of great historical and physiognomic experience, of the incorruptible eye for facts, the real knowledge of men, which teaches what they were and are and not what they ought to be; the Skepticism of true historical thought which teaches, amongst other things, that there have been other periods wherein criticism was all-powerful, and that these periods have left little impress behind them; and the Skepticism which brings reverence

for the facts of world happening, which are and remain inward secrets to be described but never explained, and to be mastered only by men of a strong breed *who are themselves historical facts*, but by sentimental programs and systems.

The hard recognition of historical fact which has set in with this century is intolerable too soft, uncontrolled natures. They detest those who establish them, calling them pessimists. Well, but this *strong* pessimism, with which belongs the contempt for mankind of all great fact-men who *know* mankind, is quite a different matter from the cowardly pessimism of small and weary souls which fear life and cannot bear to look at reality. The life they hope for, spent in peace and happiness, free from danger and replete with comfort, is boring and senile, apart from the fact that it is only imaginable, not possible. On this rock, the reality of history, every ideology must flounder.

Misreading the Present

As regards to the international situation of the moment, we are all in danger of misreading it. After the American Civil War (1861-5), the Franco-German War (1870-1), and the Victorian Age, existence and progress among the White races ran so incredibly calm, secure, peaceful, and carefree that one may search in vain through the centuries for anything analogous. Anyone who has lived through that period, or even heard about it from others, is always liable to regard it as normal and the wild present as a disturbance of this natural state of affairs, and to wish that things may soon "look up again." Now, that will *not* be the case, and we shall never see that kind of thing again. We do not realize what led up to this, in the long run, impossible situation.

There was the *fact* that standing and expanding armies rendered a war so incalculable that no statesman any longer dared to make one; the *fact* that technical economic development was in a feverish condition which was bound to come to a speedy end because of its dependence on rapidly vanishing conditions; and, finally, the resultant *fact* that the grave, unsolved problems of the time were being pushed more and more into the future, loaded as an unavoidable commitment on the shoulders of the heirs and heirs' heirs, so successfully that men ceased to believe in their reality although they were looming out of the future with steadily growing insistence.

If few can stand a long war without deterioration of soul, none can stand a long peace. This peace period from 1870 to 1914, and the memory of it, rendered all White men self-satisfied, covetous, void of understanding, and incapable of bearing misfortune. We see the result in the utopian conceptions and challenges which today form part of every demagogue's program; challenge to the age, to the state, to parties, and in fact to "everyone else," in complete disregard of the limits of possibility or of duty, doing and foregoing.

This all-too-long peace over a period of growing excitement is a fearful inheritance. Not a statesman, not a party, hardly even a political thinker is today in a safe enough position to speak the truth. They all lie, they all join in the chorus of the pampered, ignorant crowd who want their tomorrow to be like the good old days, only more so—although statesmen and economic leaders at least ought to be alive to the frightful reality. Only look at our

leaders of today! Once a month their cowardly and dishonest optimism announces the "upswing of the cycle" and "prosperity," on the strength of a mere flutter on the stock exchange caused by building speculations; the end of unemployment, from the moment that a hundred men or so are given jobs, and as the climax the achievement of "mutual understanding between the nations," as soon as the League—that swarms of parasitic holiday-makers on the Lake of Geneva—has formulated any sort of resolution. And in every conference and every paper the word "crisis" is banded about in connexion with any passing disturbance of the peace. And thus we deceive ourselves, blind to the fact that we have here one of those incalculable great catastrophes that are the *normal* form in which history takes its major turns.

Today's "Classical" Age

For we live in a mighty age. It is the greatest that Western Civilization has ever known or will know. It corresponds to the Classical Age from Cannae to Actium, to the age illumined by the names of Hannibal, Scipio and Gracchus, Marius, Sulla, and Caesar. The World War was but the first flash and crash from the fateful thundercloud which is passing over this century. As then, at the commencement of the *Imperium Romanum* so today the *form* of the world is being remolded from its foundations, regardless of the desires and intentions of "the majority" or of the number of victims demanded by every such decision.

But who understands this? Who is facing it? Does one of us consider himself lucky to be there to see it? The age is mighty, but all the more

diminutive are the people in it. They can no longer bear tragedy, either on the stage or in real life. They crave happy endings of insipid novels, so miserable and weary are they. But the destiny which pitched them into these decades now takes them by the collar and does with them what has to be done, whether they will or not. The coward's security of 1900 is at an end.

Life in danger, the real life of history, comes once more into its own. Everything has begun to slide, and now only that man counts who can take risks, who has the courage to see and accept things as they are. The age is approaching—nay, is already here—which has no more room for soft hearts and weakly ideals. The primeval barbarism which has lain hidden and bound for centuries under the form-rigor of a rupee Culture, is awake again now that the Culture is finished and the Civilization has set in: that warlike, healthy joy in one's own strength which scorns the literature-ridden age of Rationalist thought, that unbroken race-instinct, which desires a different life from one spent under the weight of books and bookish ideals. In the Western European peasantry this spirit still





To bear witness to the truth

abounds, as also on the American prairies and away in the great plains of Northern Asia, where world-conquerors are born.

Ideas and Utopias

If this is "Pessimism," then he who feels it to be so must be one who *needs* the pious falsehood or veil of ideals and utopias to protect and save him from the sight of reality. This, no doubt, is the refuge resorted to by most White men in this century—but will it be so in the next? Their forefathers in the time of the Great Migration and the Crusades were different. They condemned such an attitude as cowardly. It is from this cowardice in the face of life that Buddhism and its offshoots arose in the Indian Culture at the corresponding stage in time.

These cults are now becoming fashionable with us. It is possible that a late religion of the West is in process of formation—whether under the guise of Christianity or not none can tell, but at any rate the religious "revival" which succeeds Rationalism

as a world philosophy does hold quite special possibilities of new religions emerging. People with tired, cowardly, senile souls seek refuge from the age in something which by reason of its miraculous doctrines and customs is better able to rock them into the sleep of oblivion than the Christian churches. The *credo quia absurdum* of history and the cruelty of existence—arises not from things themselves but from morbid reflection on them. It is the annihilating judgment upon the worth and the strength of men's own souls. A profound view of the world need not necessarily be saturated with tears.

There is a Nordic world-feeling, reaching from England to Japan, which is full of joy just because of the burden of human destiny. One challenges it for the sake of conquering it, and one goes under proudly should it prove stronger than one's own will. This was the attitude depicted in the old, genuine parts of the Mahabharata, which tell of the fight between the Kurus and Pandus; in Homer, Pindar, and Aeschylus; in the Germanic sagas and in Shakespeare; in certain songs of the Chinese Shu king, and in the world of the Samurai. It is the *tragic* view of life, which is *not* yet dead but will blossom anew in the future just as it blossomed in the World War. All the very great poets of the Nordic Cultures have been tragedians, and tragedy, from ballad and epic onward, has been the deepest form of this *brave pessimism*.

Enduring Tragedy

The man who is incapable of experiencing or enduring tragedy can never be a figure of world significance.

He cannot *make* history unless he experiences it as it really is—tragic, permeated by destiny, and in consequence, meaningless, aimless, and unmoral in the eyes of the worshippers of utility. It marks the parting of the ways between the superior and the subordinate ethos of human existence. The individual's life is of importance to none beside himself: the point is whether he wishes to escape from history or give his life for it. History reckons nothing of human logic. Thunderstorms, earthquakes, lava-streams: these are near relatives of the purposeless, elemental events of world history. Nations may go under, ancient cities of ageing Cultures burn or sink in teeth broken, who hate others on account of the attacks which they themselves are wise enough to avoid. Only look at them. They are too weak to read a book on war but they herd together in the street to see an accident, letting the blood and the screams play on their nerves.

And if even that is too much for them they enjoy it on the film and in the illustrated papers. If I call man a beast of prey, which do I insult: man or beast? For remember, the larger beasts of prey are *noble* creatures, perfect of their kind, and without the hypocrisy of human morals due to weakness.

They shout "No more war"—but they desire class-war. They are indignant when a murderer is executed for a crime of passion but they feel a secret pleasure in hearing of the murder of a political opponent. What objection have they ever raised to the Bolshevik slaughters? There is no getting away from it: conflict is the ruins, but the earth will continue to revolve calmly around the sun and the stars to run their courses.



**To bear
witness
to the
truth**

Man is a beast of prey. I shall say it again and again. All the would-be moralists and social ethics people who claim or hope to be "beyond all that" are only beasts of prey with their original fact of life, is life itself, and not the most pitiful pacifist is able entirely to uproot the pleasure it gives his inmost soul. Theoretically, at least, he would like to fight and destroy all opponents of pacifism.

The further we advance into the Caesarism of the Faustian world, the more clearly will it emerge who is destined ethically to be the subject and who the object of historical events. The dreary train of world-improvers has now come to the end of its amble through these centuries, leaving behind it, as sole monument of its existence, mountains of printed paper. The Caesars will now take its place. High policy, *the art of the possible*, will again enter upon its eternal heritage, free from all systems and theories, itself the judge of the facts by which it rules, and gripping the world between its knees like a good horseman.